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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: CEC MULLS RESPONSE TO ODIHR'S CONDITIONS FOR
OBSERVING ELECTIONS

REF: MOSCOW 296

Classified By: Pol M/C Alice G. Wells. Reasons: 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: The Central Election Commission (CEC) February 6 continued to mull over the latest proposal from ODIHR Director Strohal to monitor the March 2 presidential elections. The Ambassador told DFMs Yakimenko and Grushko February 6 that the USG supported ODIHR's desire to have its mission on the ground by February 15 and deployed throughout the country by February 18, and urged the GOR to accept ODIHR's compromise. Separately, the Ambassador stressed the importance of ODIHR's involvement to CEC Chairman Churov, and urged the CEC to address ODIHR's remaining concerns. CEC contacts told us February 6 that Strohal's letter was under active consideration and that they expected to respond soon. End summary.

CEC Mulls Response

12. (C) The Central Election Commission (CEC) - ODIHR negotiation over the timing of the arrival of the 75-person mission slated to observe the March 2 presidential elections continued February 6 with the CEC reportedly actively considering the latest proposal by ODIHR Director Strohal. That proposal reportedly would have the all members of the planned 75-person delegation on the ground February 15 for deployment around Russia by February 18. The CEC had proposed a February 20 arrival date. CEC International Affairs Director Nikolay Zhukov told us February 6 that Strohal's letter was under discussion, but that the decision was not the CEC's alone to make. He thought a response would be issued by late afternoon February 6. There had been no response as of 1900 local, however.

13. (C) The Ambassador February 6 told DFMs Yakivenko and Grushko that the USG supported ODIHR and urged the GOR to have the CEC address ODIHR's remaining concerns about the timing of the arrival of its observation mission. The Ambassador stressed the importance of having international monitors and ODIHR set the highest standard for the upcoming elections. Both ministers took the Ambassador's comments on board but had no substantive comment.

14. (C) Finnish Ambassador Helenius told Ambassador February 6 that the Slovenian Ambassador had delivered an EU demarche to Grushko on the matter earlier in the day February 6, and that Grushko had offered no response. According to Helenius, CEC Chairman Churov was upset that ODIHR had broken what he believed was an agreement not to go public with the state of the negotiations. (Churov had told Ambassador February 5 (reftel) that the sides had agreed to quiet negotiations on matters related to observation mission.) Helenius thought it was "not necessarily bad" that the CEC had not immediately responded to Strohal's counter-proposal.

15. (C) Comment: Calls to the CEC the evening of February 6 suggest that that Churov and company are still mulling over their response. Churov's behavior at his February 5 lunch with Ambassador (reftel) suggested he was willing to negotiate with ODIHR over the timing, size, and conditions under which an observation mission would work but, as one of his aides pointed out, the decision is not the CEC's alone to make.
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